

## **Keweenaw Bay Indian Community**

### *Becoming Visible: Healing our Community through Story* project

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community's project, *Becoming Visible: Healing our Community through Story*, will focus on three areas of storytelling—oral, print, and visual—to explore and preserve different media of stories (both modern and traditional) representing our culture and traditions. Oral story styles include recording stories of community elders and hosting a story circle for youth. Print story styles include book pages posted to our storybook trails, author talks, and providing books for the Library's remote book houses. Finally, visual stories will include traditional arts and regalia. Each media form provides participants with an opportunity to learn more about our language, culture, and community knowledge.

### **Project Justification**

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community's *Becoming Visible: Healing our Community through Story* project will fall under IMLS Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants Goal 3: Enhance preservation and revitalization of Native American cultures and languages, and work toward objective 3.2: support the preservation of content unique and specific value to native communities.

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC), a federally recognized tribe, is primarily located on the L'Anse Indian Reservation, which is on the Eastern base of the Keweenaw Peninsula in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It is comprised of two counties—Baraga and Marquette. There are a total of 3,642 tribal members, of which 1,120 live in Baraga County, which is where our library is located. The rural location of the reservation and trust lands make it difficult to locate and access resources. Residents in this remote area face long distances between communities. The nearest town for supplies away from the main reservation is nearly 30 miles away. The L'Anse Indian Reservation in Baraga County is nearly 500 miles from Lansing, Michigan's capital, and almost 200 miles from Green Bay, Wisconsin, the closest large metropolitan area. Access to services common in those areas, participation in supportive organizations, and training opportunities are not readily available here.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the economy of the area was tenuous. The community has suffered even more during the pandemic— Baraga County, where most of the tribal members reside, had a record high unemployment rate of 27.7% in April 2020, just after the tribal shutdowns (Reno Gazette Journal, 2021). The same county also records that 14.86 % of community members live in poverty (Data USA, 2019), while 16.7% of families and 21% of children between the ages of 0-17 are living under the poverty level (Michigan.gov, 2020). While the economy is beginning to improve, Baraga County has continually ranked among the highest unemployment rates in the state for several years. According to the US Census Bureau's Quick Facts for Baraga County, 89.9% of people over age 25 graduated from high school, but only 15.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher. The combination of consistent high unemployment rates, number of families in poverty, and lower high school and college graduation rates in the county demonstrate a critical need for library services.

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To fill that need for its members the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community has a small library—the Ojibwa Community Library—which is open to both tribal members and the local public. The Ojibwa Community Library staff work to maintain and improve library services, and to increase library use each year. The tribe supports the library director’s position, collection development, and some children’s programming costs. Current library information includes: Hours—20 hours per week with services provided on Mon & Fri: 9:00-4:00; and Wed: 12:00-6:00; Staff—One Librarian, who is also a KBIC member; and Patrons—780 currently registered patrons and approximately 300 of them use the library monthly. The Library provides vital resources for the community, including access to print, non-print, and digital information; other services such as laminating, photocopying, scanning, and printing; inter-library loan services; and a summer reading program for adults and children. Other libraries in the area either do not provide sufficient hours, are far away (over 30 miles), or ask patrons to pay for library cards and other access because they don’t live in the same county. Currently, the library’s collection has approximately 8,000 items, and houses a wide variety of materials such as: popular fiction and non-fiction titles, a large collection of Native American fiction, non-fiction, and literature, a small section for teens/young adults featuring both Native American items and popular titles, and a modest children’s section also featuring both Native American materials, and popular titles in fiction and non-fiction. We also have a limited selection of DVDs that includes both Native American topics, and newer popular movies. Additionally, the library offers wireless internet access, and is home to six public computers, and six android tablets for use during programming.

In the *Becoming Visible: Healing our Community through Story* project, the Library would like to explore stories and storytelling. Storytelling is important to Ojibwe culture as it is a traditional way of conveying information between community members. Stories were used to teach morals, spiritual and cultural beliefs, and traditional methods of doing tasks. Stories also were used to give advice and communicated important tribal historical events. Currently, other KBIC departments and the nearby tribal college offer programs that demonstrate traditional arts, foods, and knowledge, a community garden program, and culture camps. Even though many of these programs allow for storytelling as the participants are working, there are no programs that specifically focus on the preservation of culturally and historically significant stories and ways of storytelling. Important stories from community elders and historians are being lost because they are not documented or passed down. Additionally, the cultural aspects of storytelling such as when to tell stories and who can hear them are not included in these programs. Allowing the stories to be available to the community, with limitations for culturally sensitive information, would also allow tribal members who do not reside near the reservation to have access to important knowledge and history.

Our target groups for this project are KBIC elders, youth, and families. Community survey results show that nearly 72% of respondents want the library’s future programming to focus on preservation and revitalization of Ojibwe language and culture. Previous surveys also illustrated that respondents would like for the library to focus on this area. Additionally, the most recent survey respondents noted that they’d like for us to focus on family programming. Our proposed

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project combines the need to preserve and revitalize our cultural stories and methods of storytelling with additional family programming. The anticipated beneficiaries of our project include future generations of KBIC members and descendants, current youth in our community, families, the surrounding communities, and anyone else interested in learning more about our tribe.

### **Project Work Plan**

Through this project, we will explore various types of stories and ways in which they are told. The types of media we will use will range from traditional to more modern. The stories are categorized into three styles—oral, print, and visual.

Oral stories include recordings of elder stories and Story Circle sessions with youth. Elder stories will be gathered through an interview process. The Library will seek five volunteers from the tribal community to interview tribal elders. Volunteers will take a training session to ensure they are aware of the correct way to approach elders and collect oral histories. Recorded sessions will then be returned to the Library where the Library staff will store, upload, and provide metadata for each session. Interviews will be made available to the public through the content management system (CMS) Mukurtu. Some stories may not be available for all to hear due specific cultural content. Those stories will be password protected and available for the appropriate community members in the same CMS. The Library will also reach out to local storytellers to host four Story Circle events. During the Story Circle program, storytellers will share stories of cultural or historical significance to the youth participants including information as to how and when is appropriate to tell stories. Youth will have the opportunity to explore different types of storytelling as well as various media used in historic and modern storytelling. The children will also be encouraged to tell their own stories with whatever media (speech, pictures, video, books) they choose to use in a safe and supportive environment.

Print stories will be explored in a few different ways. First, culturally appropriate stories will be posted to the Library's Storybook trails. These stories will show community youth and families modern and positive representations of indigenous people. The Library will also host programs related to the stories posted on the trail. Each event will use different activities and discussions to help encourage critical thinking, comprehension, visualization, and story sequencing. These sessions will also provide opportunities for parents and guardians to engage with their children. Secondly, the library will host three print storyteller events (author talks) with Ojibwe authors in-person. These talks will range in target audience from youth to adult. Authors may choose to speak about their writing process and character development, encouragement to aspiring authors in the community, or even read excerpts of their work to participants. These presentations will give attendees a positive association with books and reading as well as encourage them to visit the library more frequently. Finally, the Library will also purchase books to giveaway to community members through the tribe's remote library book houses, which are located in various places throughout the reservation. One day a week, the Education Department Assistant will come to the library to pick up books to be distributed to each book

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house. They will track what books and how many are being added, which/how many have been used, and look for trends in materials to better refine the books available for the reading tastes of these particular neighborhoods. The book houses offer a way to encourage reading and literacy in areas of the reservation where it might be too difficult to travel to the library.

The final style of storytelling we want to focus on in our project is visual stories. These will take the form of art or “wearable” stories. In Ojibwe culture, it is customary for regalia and art to have meaning behind them. For example, many elements of our regalia have a story. The colors, ribbons, beadwork, and applique are not only beautiful artwork, but also tell stories of family or lost loved ones, names, histories, traditional teachings, or something the wearer is passionate about. The visual storytelling will take place during four Family Night events hosted by the Library. Each Family Night will have a different focus—art/painting, beadwork, ribbon work and applique. Attendees will be able to participate in making an item (skirt, artwork, medallions, etc.) during each Family Night that they will be able to take with them. The Library will also have a tablet to showcase different visual stories, language and cultural videos, the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) cultural game “Growing Up Ojibwe,” and other current resources as an interactive display. The interactivity of the Family Night events and touchscreen resources will provide people with a kinesthetic learning experience. By being hands on with a portion of the project, we anticipate that participants will remember the teachings, meanings, and information being presented.

Specific activities required to fulfill the grant objectives are as follows:

1. Collect Elder stories through interviews:
  - a. Seek and secure community volunteers to complete training and collect elder stories
  - b. Provide training for those volunteers who may need to gain skills necessary to interview about culturally sensitive topics
  - c. Approach community elders to participate in storytelling
  - d. Provide gas cards to both volunteers and community elders to offset travel costs
  - e. Interview and record elders telling stories— elder preference and cultural relevance will determine media format (video or voice-only)
  - f. Upload recorded stories to Mukurtu, our selected content management system (CMS)
  - g. Add appropriate related metadata to recorded stories
  - h. Add any appropriate cultural limitations to the stories if necessary
  - i. Make stories available to the public through Mukurtu portal
2. Create a youth story circle program:
  - a. Work with community storytellers to lead a story circle program in the library
  - b. Storytellers will tell teachings, etc. during the story circle time
  - c. Youth will have the opportunity to explore different types of storytelling as well as different media used in modern/historic storytelling
  - d. Youth will have the opportunity to share their own stories in a safe environment
3. Host Ojibwe author talks:

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- a. Seek out and invite Ojibwe print storytellers (authors) to come to the community to speak about their work and inspiration for their books
- b. Print storytellers will range from picture book authors to adult authors
- c. Promote author talk to the community
4. Remote Library book houses:
  - a. Include culturally relevant items
  - b. Include diverse/inclusive items
  - c. Track what books are used in the book houses to monitor trends (list of what is added each week/what is gone to determine neighborhood reading trends/likes)
  - d. Monitor and maintain weekly by Education Assistant
5. Storybook Trails and programs:
  - a. Use culturally relevant books on trails
  - b. Plan events to build literacy skills such as reading comprehension, visualization, and critical thinking and sequencing
  - c. Promote events and use of trails
6. Family Night:
  - a. Select a theme to guide the activities and stories for the night (ex. art/painting, beadwork, applique, or ribbon skirts/shirts)
  - b. Promote family night event to community

#### Other Activities that must occur to complete the project:

1. Increase hours for the Librarian and provide a Library Assistant
2. Provide hours for the education assistant to work on remote library and storybook trail
3. Increase Library hours of operation
4. Purchase project materials (books, periodicals, DVDs or CDbooks)
5. Purchase library materials (computers, recorders, CMS, website hosting, etc.)
6. Process new items for circulation
7. Host a summer reading program for elders, adults, teens, and children
8. Librarian attends IMLS and ATALM meetings, regional and local trainings and workshops
9. Advertise available services and project activities
10. Attend community events to promote project services and activities
11. Purchase books to giveaway during community events as promotion for project
12. Develop surveys and questionnaires to determine participant understanding and interest before and after grant activities

There are a variety of potential risks to the project that we will try to mitigate. Firstly, and most importantly, the number of elders in the community with specific culturally and historically significant stories is small. In the last couple of years, we have lost several elders to illness so the timing of this project is important in preserving our community's information. Not preserving these stories would cause large portions of information, teachings, history to die out with them. This is the biggest risk, and one that we hope to mitigate by recording the stories and focusing on how stories are told in our culture. We also anticipate that we may have

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difficulty finding community members who want to interview elders to gather their stories. To help, we will offer gas cards to offset the costs of travel.

Secondly, we may have elders who are willing to share their stories, but not have them recorded. It might be important for elders to know that their stories will not be posted on a very public forum, but that they will be housed initially within the library on hard drives and then uploaded to a content management system where we can set controls on who is allowed to view certain content and when. Elders may also be more comfortable being recorded with voice only instead of being on video. We will also have release forms for the elders to sign to ensure we have the correct level of public access for each interview.

Other potential risks include scheduling for activities such as the Story Circle program, Family Nights, and the Storybook trail events. Scheduling programming in the community can sometimes be difficult due to school and local sporting events year round, and KBIC Youth Department summer programming. As a solution, we may be able to host some of story circle programming in the youth department's facility so that many children can join. We can also send out a survey to those families who have expressed interest in, or signed up for, other activities to see what times work best for them before creating a schedule.

Finally, another anticipated risk is with implementing the content management system, Mukurtu. Since this is the first time using a content management system of this nature, Library staff would require training to use once it is installed. Also, because Mukurtu is based on Dublin Core metadata techniques, Library staff will also have to learn how to do this as it is different from the style of metadata they are familiar with using. To offset this, installation and training would occur near the beginning of year one well before full implementation and public access opens to allow staff time to learn the new system. Mukurtu has trainings and support available on their website, and resources about Dublin Core are also available online.

Planning, implementation, and project management will be a combined effort between the KBIC Education Department director and the Tribal Librarian. The Education Department director, Liz Julio, will serve as the project director. She is a KBIC tribal member, and has 21 number of years overseeing various grant projects and activities in educational settings.

Project activities will be coordinated by the Tribal Librarian, Angela Badke, who has worked at the Ojibwa Community Library for six years and has experience coordinating and implementing IMLS grant activities for both the Basic and Enhancement grants. She is a KBIC tribal member, and is currently working toward her Master of Library and Information Science.

The Tribal Librarian will be responsible for pairing community members with elders, as well as for setting up and scheduling the Story Circle group, Ojibwe author talks, Family Nights, and library programs at the Storybook trails. She will also be responsible for assigning tasks to the Library Assistant and Education Assistant. The Library Assistant would be assigned tasks related to the project such as daily operations and tasks, cataloging, working within the CMS, preparing items for events and programming. The Education Assistant will first report to the Education



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Department director, who will then assign them to the library for 7 hours a week where they will work on changing out stories posted on the Storybook trails, refilling the book houses, and learning the Library's integrated library system to perform basic support such as check-in/out as needed during winter months when Storybook trails are closed and book houses may not need to be refilled as frequently.

The time and personnel needed to complete the project will be mainly that of the Tribal Librarian and Library Assistant positions as well as the Education Department Assistant and community members who are working with the library to collect stories or run the story circle. The Library will also participate in the Summer Youth Worker program where we will select a youth employee to assist in summer reading preparation and programs. Resources necessary for the project will be technology needed to support the interviewing process such as recorders, a new video camera, and support for the CMS; supplies for Family Night events such as painting supplies, ribbon, and beads; and supplies for Story Circle and Storybook trail events (notebooks, pens, colored pencils, loose paper, etc.).

We plan to share our findings and lessons learned with other tribal communities that are hoping to implement a similar project through attendance at conferences such as the Association for Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) in year two. Local and regional library conferences can also be utilized. Local outlets include regular monthly reports to the KBIC Education Department, who then will report on our behalf to the Tribal Council; radio station programming such as Indigenous Insights; and through the Library's Facebook page and YouTube channel to inform community members. Radio programming and social media will be used to bring awareness to the project as well as notify community members when events and programming will occur.

### **Project Results**

The KBIC's *Becoming Visible: Healing our Community through Story project* has several intended results. Our biggest result is that we will be able to preserve and make available important stories from our tribal elders with content that is unique and specific to our tribe while also passing down the way in which we share stories to the next generations. This will allow the library to preserve and maintain important tribal, historical, and cultural information that is currently lacking in other community programs. This project also is the revitalization of the cultural practice of storytelling processes and methods by passing down how we tell stories, when we can tell stories, and what kind of stories we tell to future generations. Currently, there is no project preserving this information or revitalizing our cultural practice of storytelling in our community. As we noted before, Elders in our community are passing away, and with them, our stories disappear. This project would ultimately result in not only the beginning of saving these stories, but also set the library up to continue similar projects.

Furthermore, The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted many of our opportunities to come together as a community and forge connections over the last two years. As we know, across the country isolation and disconnection from communities due to the pandemic can impact self-esteem and

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mental health. We believe this project will also increase self-confidence and self-esteem in our community by creating resources that came directly from our tribe and showcases tribal elders in a positive manner. The storytelling process will also improve community connections and develop relationships between community members, elders, and youth. Finally, increases in library staff and library hours of operation will result in continued critical services for a low-income and economically weak community. We also believe that the programming and additional hours will result in higher patronage for the library.

We believe this project will change the attitudes, knowledge, skills, behaviors, or capabilities of our target group as a result of this project. Elders will build stronger community ties with younger generations who are collecting the elder stories. They can have a sense of pride in contributing to community resources, and increased self-esteem/self-confidence from participating, telling their stories, and sharing those experiences and knowledge with others. Youth will learn how to tell stories in a traditional manner and gain increased knowledge of Ojibwe culture and language. They will also learn more about different media forms of storytelling as well as how we tell stories traditionally in our culture. The youth will be encouraged to share their own stories during the story circle program, developing the skills needed to not only tell stories, but also share information in a group setting.

Providing culturally relevant stories on the Storybook trails and in the remote book houses will give community youth and families the opportunity to see positive and modern representations of indigenous people in a manner that is often lacking in our local school systems as well as provide access to those limited by transportation. The Storybook trail programs will increase literacy skills such as comprehension, visualization, critical thinking, and sequencing through activities and discussions related to the stories posted on the trails. Family Night events will grant participants with a time to create their own stories using different styles of visual media. Attendees will learn historic and traditional ways these media were used, as well as new skills when creating their own pieces. Hosting Ojibwe print storyteller (author) talks at the library will also provide positive representation, encouragement for local aspiring authors, and pass down important ways of telling stories in a print medium. We also believe that programming for the Storybook trail, author talks, Story Circle, and Family Night as well as the extended library hours of operation will increase patronage and use of the library facility by community members and families. Families will see the library as a positive place to bring their children as we will host programming that is focused on increasing childhood literacy and skills. The programming will provide families with opportunities to engage more with their children and develop techniques to talk to their children about books, stories, and reading.

There will be a few tangible products that come from this project. Namely, the recordings of several elder stories that will be stored, uploaded, cataloged, and made available to the community. In addition, participants will create portions of regalia, beadwork, or artwork.

If awarded, this grant will provide the Ojibwa Community Library with the equipment, training, procedures and protocols to continue this work after the grant period ends. The content management system is open source and free to use, and supplies the library with an online



Pages in excess of the limit specified in  
the Notice of Funding Opportunity  
have been removed by IMLS staff.

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	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Planning	X	X	X				X	X	X			
Seek Interviewers		X										
Interviewer Training		X	X									
Install CMS		X	X									
CMS training		X	X									
Seek Elders			X	X	X							
Interview			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Upload, catalog			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mukurtu portal available						X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gas cards			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Story Circle leader	X											
Story Circle events		X			X			X			X	
Ojibwe authors				X				X				
author talks						X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Remote Book Houses	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
monitor and maintain	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Storybook Trails open									X	X	X	X
Storybook Trail events										X	X	X
Family Nights		X			X			X			X	
Promote/advertising			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Increase lib hr/provide asst	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
provide hrs for Ed Asst	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Purchase project materials	X	X	X		X		X	X	X			
Purchase library materials	X	X	X		X		X	X	X			
Process items for circ	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Summer Reading Program										X	X	X
ATALM			X									
Giveaways (purch/distrib)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Surveys/questionnaires		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Events
Planning, scheduling, other activities



## **Digital Product Plan**

### **Type**

The digital content to be collected during the Becoming Visible: Healing our Community through Story project will be recorded interviews with tribal elders. We anticipate about 40 recordings in all. Some will be on video, while we expect most of those interviews to be audio only. We will use common easily accessible file formats. Audio files will be .mp3 and .wav while videos will be .mov and .mp4 files. Metadata accompanying each interview will first be written in Excel, and then imported into Mukurtu. We will use standard Dublin Core (DC) metadata with appropriate crosswalk for MARC metadata. DC metadata is used by the Content Management System (CMS) we've picked.

### **Availability**

Recorded elder interviews will be made available to the public through the Mukurtu CMS, which will be linked to the library's website. Both the digital content and accompanying metadata will be available for viewing through Mukurtu. Some of the content will be made fully available to the public through the internet. However, depending on the interviewee's wishes or cultural content captured during the interview, some interviews may not be available to the general public, or during specific times of the year. Content restricted due to cultural sensitivities will require a password. For seasonally restricted materials, access will be granted during the appropriate season. To view or listen to the content, a computer with software able to play video and/or audio and current web browser would be needed.

### **Access**

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community will use release forms to secure permissions from the elders being interviewed to use their interviews and post them to the Mukurtu CMS. Depending on the interviewees' wishes, however, some content may be restricted to either in-library use, or password protected due to cultural sensitivities. Additionally, interviewees may notify the library if any content within the interview needs to be restricted due to season. In Anishinaabe culture, some stories can be told only during winter when there is snow on the ground. The content will be made available through Mukurtu CMS, which was selected because it has the ability to restrict at various levels including by season. We will use Mukurtu's Traditional Knowledge (TK) labels, which align with KBIC cultural protocols as well as specific community restrictions for access and use.

### **Sustainability**

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community is dedicated to preserving community and cultural information. This project is the first time the KBIC is working to not only preserve, but also make more accessible the cultural stories and methods of storytelling. The interviews and accompanying metadata collected will be stored in three places. First of all, versions will be available through Mukurtu CMS and our hosted server. Additionally, we will store other copies of the interviews and the Excel sheets with accompanying metadata on two local external hard drives. Fixity checks will be performed every six months, and hard drives will be replaced every

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seven years. We are also talking with UPLink, which is an organization dedicated to helping heritage sites preserve collections. The goal is to form a partnership with them during the grant period to assist in developing a plan to digitize pre-existing material located on the reservation. We plan to leverage the results of the *Becoming Visible: Healing our Community through Story* project to secure more funding from the tribe and to work closely with the KBIC Tribal Historic Preservation Office.